

Meet 'em Where They Are

How to Respond to Online Shopper Advice



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by

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There is a lot of advice online and in books for shoppers to consider. Have you ever observed what is being advised so that you can respond successfully?

The pervasive theme is how to feel confident and guard against a dealer taking advantage of you. (I find that theme universally held, unfortunately.) It's a shame. But, it exists, you can't change it; so learn to address the reality.

Your shoppers want to be in control.

Accept that and respond so they will return for more.

By doing this you can create a truly fantastic experience for your shoppers and convert them into your long-term customers.

The chart includes a step-by-step approach for shoppers to research, negotiate, and purchase a new car.

On the left are the **verbatim** advice – thoughts and activities that a shopper is advised to take before driving away in their new wheels.

On the right are actions for you to take.

At the end is a plan for ways you can improve your individual actions.

Advice from Online Shopper Site	Your Actions
<p>1. <i>Four things you need to accomplish:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Discover the fundamentals of car research.</i> • <i>Learn how to negotiate for the best price.</i> • <i>Pit dealers against one another.</i> • <i>Become a shrewd negotiator.</i> <p><i>While it may seem scary at first, equip yourself with the proper mental and emotional tools so you can make the right choices and drive happily for years to come.</i></p>	<p><u>REALIZE</u> that customers are probably starting out in a <u>DEFENSIVE</u> posture. Do not meet defensiveness with an <u>OFFENSIVE</u> posture.</p> <p>Create a <u>SAFE</u> space:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond quickly and fully. • Answer questions fully and with evidence, when possible. • Be open, transparent, approachable. • Follow the customer's lead and timeframe.
<p>2. <i>Know your needs. Ask yourself these questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Do you have environmental or fuel concerns?</i> • <i>How much cargo space do you need?</i> • <i>Is safety a priority? (Hint: it should be.)</i> • <i>How often do you drive?</i> • <i>How many people will your vehicle need to accommodate?</i> • <i>Can you drive a standard transmission vehicle?</i> • <i>Will you be reselling the car?</i> • <i>How important is a warranty?</i> • <i>Are you going to need to fit your car into small spots?</i> • <i>Do you need to go off-road?</i> 	<p>Create a <u>SAFE</u> space:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>RESPOND</u> quickly and fully. • <u>ANSWER</u> questions fully and with evidence, when possible. • Be <u>OPEN, TRANSPARENT, APPROACHABLE.</u> • Follow the <u>CUSTOMER'S LEAD</u> and timeframe.
<p>3. <i>Study your income and expenses. Don't forget insurance, gas prices, maintenance, tolls and other "ownership" costs.</i></p>	<p>Use <u>BENEFIT</u> statements to reinforce their values. Tie your statements to insurance costs/savings, miles per gallon, maintenance, etc.</p>

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<p>4. Take advantage of useful car information online. <u>Edmunds.com</u>, <u>CarBuyingTips.com</u> and <u>Intellichoice.com</u> for online-buying guides, finance information and reviews. Also, magazines like <u>Consumer Reports</u>, <u>Car and Driver</u> and <u>Automobile Magazine</u>. Once you're confident in your vehicle choices, Edmunds's online <u>True Market Value (TMV) application</u> will help determine its market value, giving you a solid figure for negotiations later. Dealing online can save you time and money, but be certain you're dealing with trusted sites. It's important to remember that online dealers are still salespeople and should be treated accordingly.</p>	<p><u>VISIT</u> these sites and get familiar with their advice and information on your products. Remember that they are being advised not to trust you, so use <u>OBJECTIVE EVIDENCE</u> whenever possible.</p>
<p>5. Listen to peers. Ask friends and family about good and bad experiences with vehicles, dealerships and sales representatives.</p>	<p><u>ASK</u> about why they chose your dealership. <u>ACKNOWLEDGE</u> friends recommendations. Do NOT pile on about your competition if negatives are brought up about another dealership or brand of vehicle.</p>
<p>6. Become scam proof. A salesperson works on commission and a dealership will gouge on fees and services if given the opportunity. Visit a dealer when no one else will: rainy days, late evenings, etc. Never buy a car during a sale; sales are designed to convince consumers they're getting a deal. Dealerships never hold a sale without knowing they'll make back the difference and then some.</p>	<p><u>REALIZE</u> the coaching they have gotten on this. Be <u>TRANSPARENT</u>. Fully disclose information about your vehicles and your sales process.</p>

Advice from Online Shopper Site	Your Actions
<p>7. <i>Use the internet department. The internet can help you get to a dealer's bottom line quickly. When you're ready to start talking real numbers and you contact a dealer through its internet department, the staff knows they're dealing with a serious and knowledgeable shopper. By contacting several local dealerships' internet departments and comparing the results, you should get the best price possible.</i></p>	<p><u>ASK</u> if they have received a quote from your dealership already. <u>RESPOND</u> accordingly.</p>
<p>8. <i>Plot your ceremonial first route. Make a prioritized list of places you're going to take your new car. If you're truly ambitious, write down all the pros those wheels will provide and you'll know just how much better off you'll be. Go to the store and buy some vehicle accessories, or get ready to transfer those fuzzy dice and the dashboard hula girl to a new home</i></p>	<p>Find out how they plan to use their new vehicle so you can <u>OFFER SUGGESTIONS</u> about trim packages or accessories.</p> <p>Ask if there are any special <u>ACCESSORIES</u> they've purchased or are looking forward to getting. <u>PRESENT</u> the <u>BENEFITS</u> of financing accessories with the vehicle loan.</p>
<p>9. <i>Sometimes, car manufacturers offer incentives to sell less popular or overstocked vehicles. Up-to-date information on them is available online at <u>Edmunds.com</u> and <u>FightingChance.com</u>. Incentives can reduce the cost of a vehicle in the form of a rebate or low-interest financing—occasionally as low as 0%.</i></p>	<p>Be <u>UPFRONT</u> about introducing and explain incentives. Provide printed information, if possible.</p>

Advice from Online Shopper Site	Your Actions
10. <i>Think green. It's good for the earth and pays off at the pump. You won't have to fill up as often and you can save time and money.</i>	Prepare <u>BENEFIT</u> statements to use if "green" is a customer value.
11. <i>Be flexible in your car search if you want to get the best deal. While you should know what type of vehicle addresses your needs, allowing some hedge room in the details will work in your favor. Don't confuse being flexible with being uncertain. While it's good to be willing to bend on some features, make sure your fundamental needs and budget are addressed before all else. Also, be flexible with your desires, but not with your offer when buying day comes.</i>	Help the customer <u>PRIORITIZE</u> their wants and needs. Know your inventory so that you can offer <u>ALTERNATIVES</u> that are close or that will help them to decide just how important features are to their driving lifestyle.
12. <i>As buying day draws near, you should become increasingly confident in your knowledge of cars. In order to equip yourself with the most information possible, think about augmenting your internet research with these trustworthy books:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Buying a Car for Dummies</i> • <i>Consumer Reports New Car Buying Guide</i> • <i>Edmunds.com Strategies for Smart Car Buyers</i> • <i>What Car Dealers Don't Want You to Know</i> • <i>Car Buyer's and Leaser's Negotiating Bible</i> 	<u>ACKNOWLEDGE</u> and <u>CONGRATULATE</u> them on their research and vehicle knowledge.

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<p>13. Credit score. These scores will determine the interest rate (APR) you pay on your car loan. Once you have your scores, look into different finance options from secure and trusted lenders. Most banks and credit unions have car-finance programs. Compare rates so that when you are ready to buy, you have more than one choice.</p>	<p>Know all <u>FINANCING OPTIONS</u> so that you can reassure shoppers that you will be able to get them financed.</p>
<p>14. It's time to get behind the wheel. Find out the dealerships that have the car you're looking for on the lot and schedule your test drives. Confidently state you have no intention to buy yet. This will mitigate a pushy sales pitch. Try to simulate the kind of driving experiences you'll be having regularly when you get the car on the road. It can be easy to get distracted, but do your best to focus on the car. Get an in-depth feel for the vehicle. Before you leave, if you haven't gotten the "out-the-door price," now may be a smart time to get it. Don't feel like you're being pushy by asking and don't let a reluctant salesperson stop your inquiry. Thank the dealer and let them know you'll be in touch, but don't get pressured into buying when you're not ready. Even if you fall in love with the car the moment you hit the road, you'll want to compare other vehicles before committing. After driving your other choices, your feelings may change.</p>	<p>Have a <u>PLANNED TEST DRIVE</u> route that exhibits the great features of your vehicles. Be prepared to use your route if possible. <u>CONGRATULATE</u> them on thoughtfully testing the vehicle if they want to diverge from the planned route.</p>

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<p>15. <i>By the time you're prepared to discuss a firm price, whether on the telephone, over e-mail or in person, you should know the details of your desired vehicle choices, including market values, hidden and local costs like fees and long-term insurance and finance options. No matter what the dealer says, always haggle. Car negotiations don't have to occur in just one sit down. Make sure the price you're discussing is the "out-the-door price," meaning the final sale price after all relevant fees and costs have been detailed. Never settle prematurely. Never negotiate down from the sticker value, but rather, up from the lowest possible market value. Second, always know what you're talking about.</i></p>	<p>Happily <u>ACCEPT</u> their offer. Expect it. Don't be surprised or unhappy when a customer wants to make a counter-offer or questions the price.</p>
<p>16. <i>One of the most important elements of any car you buy is safety. No matter whether you're buying a minivan or a sports car, you want to make sure you're going to be protected if you're ever in an accident. there are a few safety features you should be willing to shell out the cash for. "The feature that is by far more effective at making you safer is stability control," also buy added protection with additional air bags.</i></p>	<p>Be <u>PREPARED</u> to share <u>SAFETY</u> benefits of any product you sell and which ones have the extra features like side air bags.</p>

Advice from Online Shopper Site	Your Actions
<p>17. Frequently Asked Questions</p> <p><i>Should I trade my old car in to a dealership for a cheaper price on a new one?</i> <i>You are almost always better off selling your car independent of the dealer. Dealers will only offer you the wholesale value of your trade and that's if they're honest. Use the internet to find out the list price of your car and then let used-car buyers compete for it. Then, if a dealer can give you a comparable offer, take it.</i></p> <p><i>What is an MSRP sticker and does it matter?</i> <i>MSRP stands for Manufacturer Suggested Retail Price. But, in addition to that, the sticker verifies a car's features. Every dealer is required by law to display a vehicle's MSRP upfront. Never buy a car without one.</i></p> <p><i>What is "factory holdback" and is it real?</i> <i>Factory holdback is a percentage of the MSRP manufacturers pay car dealers on any car sold. It can be as much as 3% of a car's retail value. Some dealers deny it exists, but it certainly does. Use this to your advantage in negotiations.</i></p> <p><i>What kind of fees should I be wary of?</i> <i>Some common fees to be on the lookout for are preparation fees, maintenance fees and dealer-interest fees. A comprehensive list of fees is available here from CarBuyingTips.com. Regardless of what a dealership representative says, no costs or fees are off-limits in a negotiation.</i></p>	<p>Understand the advice they've found and that your attitude must always be <u>OPEN AND HAPPY</u> to talk about their concerns. Meet defensiveness with complete openness.</p>

Advice from Online Shopper Site	Your Actions
<p>18. <i>If you feel you absolutely must have a luxury automobile or if your needs exceed your means slightly, think about buying a certified pre-owned version of your top-rated car choice. Take it for a very thorough test drive and give it as complete an inspection as possible. Don't pay for an extra warranty. Certified pre-owned vehicles should already come with them</i></p>	<p><u>KNOW</u> your inventory so you can offer alternatives in the pre-owned category.</p>
<p>19. <i>Ask a sales representative to fax or email a complete cost worksheet and an invoice. You should have a very close estimate of the "out-the-door" price of your vehicle. Do not park your car at the dealership. Instead, park it a block or two away and walk in. Dress as an adult. Bring your offer and budget figures, car information and finance options in a neatly organized folder. Have incentives on hand. By now, you should be very confident in your negotiating capabilities and equipped with loads of information. Don't let a salesperson steer you in another direction in the final moments and take your time. After all, you've already put a few weeks in at this point. What's another day?</i></p>	<p>Be <u>TRANSPARENT</u> enough to provide information that helps them feel informed. Follow their lead and speed. Match it. Make sure they have your business card. Send photos of the tested vehicle, if possible.</p>

Advice from Online Shopper Site	Your Actions
<p>20. Do not sign any agreement or contract on a new car until you understand it completely. Some scams occur at the final moment of the exchange, so be wary. It's important to make sure you've received a "price out-the-door" before you get around to signing a deal. Dealers will tack on additional fees in final moments of a sale. Contest them. Be sure to research your state regulations ahead of time to know what documentation fees are legitimate. A salesperson or manager will walk you into the finance and insurance room, this is where they will offer you warranties, alarms and other expensive add-ons that you probably don't need. If you haven't accounted for them already, you should say no. When you're ready to sign, read every form carefully again before putting ink to paper. If you're confused, get clarification and be stern. At this point, if you're working with a respectable dealership, there will be no surprises. Once these papers have been signed, the sale is final.</p>	<p>Comfort and <u>REASSURE</u> them of good decisions. Don't rush or distract.</p>

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<p>21. <i>Protect Your Investment with insurance. Once you've determined your coverage needs and have a basic idea of the costs, solicit quotes over the internet and compare the numbers for the best deal. Since your previous insurer may not give you the greatest price, be sure to shop around and even look into your options with your renters or homeowners insurance companies as well. While your final figure may be expensive, insurance is an important line of defense.</i></p>	<p>Know what vehicles are eligible for reduced insurance rates and be able to present as benefits during the Vehicle Selection stage of the sales process.</p>
<p>22. <i>Before you drive your car off the lot, make sure nothing has changed from when you last saw it. Walk around the vehicle and check for aesthetic problems. Inspect all of the lights. You may want to press down on each corner of the car to make sure the suspensions are in order. Ask for a due bill guaranteeing the dealer will pay for any problems.</i></p>	<p>Give a full and <u>CUSTOMIZED DELIVERY TO EVERY CUSTOMER.</u></p>

Source: <http://www.first30days.com/buying-a-new-car/tips>

INDIVIDUAL ACTION PLAN

Read back through the Advice and Actions and underline or circle items that you can adopt to create a better customer experience.

List the 3 actions that you will start taking today based on the information above:

1.

2.

3.

Signature

Date